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Romans 7
The Deceiver

Chapter 6 of Romans discussed how to be free from the influence of the sin nature and enter a new life by being immersed into the death of Christ. Chapter 7 reveals that the purpose of the law was to manifest the deception of the sin nature, the overall condition of mankind and love as the solution to all of it. This can only be done as the Lord gives the spiritual understanding of the law, as it applies to the heart. This is the desire that Paul expressed to the Church at Colosse: **Colossians 1:9-11**: *9. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10. That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11. Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power...* It is God's knowledge and spiritual understanding which reveals His will, gives us strength and enables us to be fruitful in good works according to His power.

Romans 7:1-4: *1. Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them knowing (by experience) the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he lives? 2. For the woman which hath an husband (literally = under a man) is bound by the law to her husband so long as he lives; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. 3. So then if, while her husband lives, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. 4. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.* The concept "under a man" applies both to a married woman, or a daughter still under her father.

The term under the law, though not used here, is defined in these verses. The law given a Sinai governed every aspect of the lives of the people of Israel. The only escape from the dominion of the law was death. Paul uses the law concerning a woman's subjection to her husband as an allegory of a person subject to the law as opposed to being subject to Christ. An attempt to do both is spiritual adultery. Total death to self and one's own opinions are required to serve Christ in order to bring forth spiritual fruit in one's life.

What does it mean to *become dead to the law by the body of Christ*? The word "body" is used three ways in the Bible: 1) of the physical body; 2) of a body of people, as the church of Christ (Col 1:18); 3. figuratively of the functions of thoughts of the mind. Here is an illustration of the human members of the body: **1Corinthians 6:15**: *Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot?... Members of a harlot are described in **Colossians 3:5**: *Put to death, then, your members that [are] upon the earth - whoredom, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and the covetousness, which is idolatry* (YLT). Notice, these things are inward in the thinking. The "members" of Christ would be opposite, as we are cleansed by His words (Jn 15:3; Eph 5:26). Jesus also taught using body parts: **Matthew 5:29-30**: *29. And if thy right eye offend ^(G4624) thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. 30. And if thy right hand offend ^(G4624) thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish,**

and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. The Greek word, *skandalize*^{G4624}, actually means *to entrap, trip up*, figurative of *to stumble*. The eyes are a symbol of a person's understanding, and the hand is a symbol for works. If a portion of your understanding or your works is causing you to stumble - get rid of it. To be dead to the law by the body of Christ is to replace your understanding of the law with His, and act accordingly.

While there are many minor stumbling blocks in a person's life, there seems to be a least one major one. I have met people that would not alter their beliefs on the doctrine of the Godhead, no matter how clearly the scriptures present the topic; still others stumble at the truth of what is a spirit, some, the state of a person in death. For me, it was the Sabbath issue. However, I studied and sought the Lord, and even help from others, until I could clearly see that the 7th day is only a symbol of resting in Christ. Once I got past that issue, I became more open minded to examine everything I had been taught. One pagan teaching which seems to be common to all religions pertains to a supernatural being called the Devil, or Satan. This will be a giant stumbling block for many, just as the cross and the Messiah were a major stumbling blocks to the Jews. **1Peter 2:6-8:** *6. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. 7. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, 8. And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.* What is your stumbling block? Are you willing to examine ALL that the word has to say on a topic? You can be either broken by the Rock, or be crushed by It. Please, do not put off a full examination of your beliefs.

Romans 7:5-6: *5. For when we were in the flesh, the [passions] of [the] sin (natures), which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. 6. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.* In order to understand these verses, we need to jump ahead to verse 11: *For [the] sin (nature), taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.* In Paul's example, when he read the 10th commandment, the sin nature deceived him. Since he was deceived, then his understanding was corrupted and his thinking was not accurate as to what the commandments meant. Is that the fault of the law, or the way he was taught to understand the law? To be *in the flesh* is to depend on self's understanding. Example: If I do not murder anyone, then from self's way of thinking, I have kept the law. Therefore, I will look no further as to the deeper meaning of the law. (This idea applies to all the law). So, if I have a faulty understanding of the law, then the actions by the members of my body, the tongue being the most prominent, will bear the fruit of a person who is spiritually dead.

Only God can reveal the deeper meaning of the law. As we read the Bible and listen to the voice of the Spirit in our conscience, God, through Jesus, will guide us into the correct understanding; and we will realize that to hate another person in our heart is still murder (1Jn 3:15). Then we serve God and others in a new spirit, one given by God (Eze 36:25-27), and we stop trying to keep the law according to the way we, or any other man reads it.

A certain ruler asked Jesus what good thing could he do to have eternal life (Lk 18:18). Jesus told him, *You know the commandments*, then named five of them. The ruler responded, *All these have I kept from my youth up* (Lk 18:21). When Jesus told him that he lacked one thing and to sell all that he had and give to the poor (Lk 18:19-24), He was telling the man to replace his understanding (riches) with the true riches (God's; cf Lk 16:11). *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Mt 5:3). Not one person is going to understand the Bible without the aid of the Spirit of the Truth (Jesus, Jn 14:6). **Romans 11:33:** *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

Here is more context, expressing the concept more fully: **Romans 7:7-11**: 7. *What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known (by experience) [the] sin (nature), but by (understanding) the law: for I had not known (or, understood) lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.* 8. *But [the] sin (nature), taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence (evil desire). For without (understanding) the law (the outward) sin was dead.* 9. *For I was alive without (understanding) the law once: but when the (understanding of the) commandment came, [the] sin (nature) revived, and I died.* 10. *And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.* 11. *For [the] sin (nature), taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.*

The law is not sin; but neither is it life (Gal 3:21). It is merely a tool which God gave to restrain the evil of the world. When Paul came to understand that covetousness was idolatry (Col 3:5), he realized that his sin nature really was not dead. We must be ready to yield our opinions to those of Christ. Moreover, for those desiring to overcome sin, God will use the law to reveal the root of the evil that is in the heart; but He has to explain it.

Once the concept is understood, then we can plug in words that bring out the correct purpose of the law and the reason it is all in effect. **Romans 7:12-14**: 12. *Wherefore the (spiritual) law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.* 13. *Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But [the] sin (nature), that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that [the] sin (nature) by (understanding) the commandment might become exceeding sinful.* 14. *For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.*

We can also relate to Paul's struggle against the sin nature. **Romans 7:15-19**: 15. *For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.* 16. *If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.* 17. *Now then it is no more I that do it, but [the] sin (nature) that dwells in me.* 18. *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.* 19. *For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.*

Romans 7:20-23: 20. *Now if I do that I [desire] not, it is no more I that do it, but [the] sin (nature) dwelling in me.* 21. *I find then a (spiritual) law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.* 22. *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:* 23. *But I see another law (flesh's understanding of it) in my members, warring against the law (God's understanding of it) of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of [the] sin (nature) which is in my members.* Verse 22 confirms that the struggle is inward and manifested in the members of the body (hands, eyes, etc) - either for evil, or for good, depending on whose view you hold.

Romans 7:24-25: 24. *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* 25. *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.* The body of the death is described in Colossians 3:5, as members on the earth - fornication, etc. It is the body that carries out the thoughts - good or bad. It is the spiritual understanding that comes from God that allows us to serve him with a spiritual mind.

Colossians 3:1-3: 1. *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God.* 2. *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.* 3. *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. Amen.*